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Sheko language

Sheko is an Omotic language of the Afro-Asiatic language family spoken in the area between Tepi and Mizan Teferi in western Ethiopia, in the Sheko district in the Bench Maji Zone. The 2007 census lists 38,911 speakers; the 1998 census listed 23,785 speakers, with 13,611 identified as monolinguals.[3]

Sheko, together with the Dizi and Nayi languages, is part of a cluster of languages variously called "Maji" or "Dizoid".

The language is notable for its retroflex consonants (Aklilu Yilma 1988), a striking feature shared with closely related Dizi and nearby (but not closely related) Bench (Breeze 1988).

Sheko	
Native to	Ethiopia
Region	Bench Maji Zone, Kafa region
Native speakers	39,000 (2007 census)[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic ▪ Omotic ▪ North ▪ Dizoid ▪ **Sheko**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	she
Glottolog	shek1245 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/shek1245)[2]

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Phonology

Apart from the above-mentioned retroflex consonants, the phonology of Sheko is characterized by a total 28 consonant phonemes[4], five long vowels and six short vowels[5], plus four phonemic tone levels.[6]

Consonants

Hellenthal (2010, p.45) lists the following consonant phonemes of Sheko:

		Labial	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Retroflex	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	Ejective	pʼ	tʼ			kʼ	
	Voiceless		t			k	ʔ
	Voiced	b	d			g	
Affricate	Ejective		tsʼ	tʃʼ	tʂʼ		
	Voiceless		ts	tʃ	tʂ		
Fricative	Voiceless	f	s	ʃ	ʂ		h
	Voiced		z	ʒ	ʐ		
Nasal		m	n				
tap			r [ɾ]				
Approximant		w		j			

Unlike other Dizoid languages, Sheko has no contrast between /r/ and /l/.[7] Consonants are rarely geminated[8], and there is a syllabic nasal /n̩/[9]

Vowels

Hellenthal (2010, p. 56) lists the following long and short vowels of Sheko: /i/, /ii/, /e/, /ee/ /ə/, /a/, /aa/, /u/, /uu/, /o/, /oo/.

Tones

Sheko is one of very few languages in Africa that have four distinct phonemic tone levels.[10] Tone distinguishes meaning both in the lexicon and in the grammar, particularly to distinguish persons in the pronominal system.[11]

Grammar

The Ethnologue lists the following morphosyntactic features: "SOV; postpositions; genitives, articles, adjectives, numerals, relatives after noun heads; question word initial; 1 prefix, 5 suffixes; word order distinguishes subjects, objects, indirect objects; affixes indicate case of noun phrases; verb affixes mark person, number, gender of subject; passives, causatives, comparatives."

Notes

1. Ethiopia 2007 Census (http://www.csa.gov.et/index.php?option=com_rubberdoc&view=doc&id=264&format=raw&Itemid=521)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Sheko" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/shek1245). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Raymond G. Gordon Jr., ed. 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 15th edition. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
4. Hellenthal 2010, p. 45

5. Hellenthal 2010, p. 56
6. Hellenthal 2010, p. 111
7. Hellenthal 2010, p. 47
8. Hellenthal 2010, p. 47
9. Hellenthal 2010, p. 58
10. Hellenthal 2010, p. 111
11. Hellenthal 2010, p. 113

References

- Breeze, Mary. 1988. "Phonological features of Gimira and Dizi." In Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Fritz Serzisko (eds.), Cushitic – Omotic: papers from the International Symposium on Cushitic and Omotic languages, Cologne, January 6–9, 1986, 473–487. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.
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External links

- Sheko basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database (http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\omo\diz&limit=-1)
- ELAR archive of Guraferdan Sheko (http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0328)

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